








-  Home
-  NonProfit Library
-  Tribes Library
-  TRAINING
-  PRODUCTS
-  About Us
-  Contact Us

Click [Here](#) to  
Subscribe to Our  
**FREE eNewsletter**

First Name Last Name

Organization e-MAIL

Message

Specify  Plain Text  
Format  HTML

 **SUBMIT**


[Our Privacy Policy](#)

 [CLICK](#) to See  
Our Latest  
eNewsletter

## Why I Do What I Do

by *Sheelin Prinzing*

Copyright 2005:Sheelin Prinzing ©

 Email this Article to  
a Friend -[CLICK](#)

**Note:** For years, the only place we featured writers other than Hildy was in our bookstore, where we continue to feature our favorite nonprofit authors. However, this is a special exception. Sheelin's story focuses so eloquently and succinctly on the reason we all work in this sector, that we feel blessed to be able to share it with you here in our library of articles.

I received a professional disappointment today: the governor's budget for Medicaid dental funding came in substantially below the level for which many of us had advocated. The choice had seemed so obvious to us: we can either provide funding for these services now, or face even higher social **and** dollar costs down the road. Apparently the governor didn't see that logic.

I felt frustrated, powerless, feeling as if I had no control and no voice. Moving out of direct services and into foundation work four years ago forced me into a larger arena where I am not just a small fish in a big pond, I'm phytoplankton! Now I was faced with another round of communicating with legislators, or more likely their assistants. Even the delegate who is my neighbor and has known me for years sends me letters that I know have been signed by his secretary!

Needless to say, I didn't have a pleasant drive home. I mulled over the possibility of being a round peg in a square hole (you fit, but not well). Why should I even bother to try again?

When my nineteen year old son was in preschool, I was fortunate to be able to take a few years away from my high-powered advertising career to be just Mom. I was enjoying the hiatus, enjoying having time to spend with my son and with the moms of other kids his age.

I became friendly with the mother of one of his classmates, who had moved down to Virginia from Canada. As we watched the children play, we shared stories about the differences and similarities of our lives and, of course, talked about our children. She was a gentle young mother, and I felt so much more mature than her at the great age of 28. I recall doing most of the talking in our short relationship, but regardless, she seemed to enjoy our time together.

One day, though, she was more quiet than usual. There were no smiles and kisses for the children as they played; she just stared out the kitchen window of her small apartment as I babbled on. During a lull, she turned to me and told me quietly that her husband had hit her. She said he had hit her before when they lived in Canada. She didn't say anything more.

I was dumbfounded. I'd never had anyone tell me anything like this before. I didn't know what to say back, and in the puritan politeness my mother had instilled in me, I quietly waited an appropriate amount of time, gathered up Joseph and his toys, and left.

I was embarrassed. I didn't know what to do; I just didn't do anything. I avoided my friend for a couple of weeks and when I felt enough time had passed, I went to visit her, son in tow, smile plastered on my face.

No one answered my knock. Not that day. Not any other day. The family was gone. And I had an awful nameless pain in the pit of my stomach.

It was a while before I thought about what had happened. It was a while before I understood that I had heard a cry for help. I had to wait even longer before I could deal with the fact that I had ignored that cry for help.

---

I never went back to advertising. In the years since, I have helped many people who needed shelter, food, medical care, a listening ear, prescriptions, mental health services, and, yes, escape from domestic violence.

I've helped thousands of people because I couldn't help one person.

I guess that's why I'll go knock on the door of my neighbor, the state legislator tomorrow. And it's why I'll do it the next day, and the day after.

It's why I'll do it for as long as it takes.

*Sheelin Prinzinger is the Executive Director for Bedford Community Health Foundation in Bedford, Virginia. We can't thank her enough for sharing her story with us.*

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN INSTITUTE

**Was this Article Helpful?**  
**Subscribe to Our FREE eNewsletter**

First Name	Last Name	Organization	e-MAIL
<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>

Message  Format  Text  HTML

**SUBMIT**

Email this Article to a Friend [CLICK](#)

**TO DOWNLOAD A  
 PRINTER FRIENDLY  
 PDF OF THIS  
 ARTICLE:**  
[CLICK HERE](#)

[\[ Home \]](#) • [\[ NonProfit Library \]](#) • [\[ Tribes Library \]](#) • [\[ TRAINING \]](#) • [\[ PRODUCTS \]](#) • [\[ About Us \]](#) • [\[ Contact Us \]](#)

Website Design by Dimitri Petropolis  
 © 2000-2006 ReSolve, Inc. All Rights Reserved